

# News Release

Bureau of Land Management, Little Snake Field Office  
455 Emerson St., Craig, CO 81625  
Tel 970-826-5000 • Fax 970-826-5002  
[www.blm.gov](http://www.blm.gov)

Contact: David Boyd, Public Affairs Specialist, (970) 876-9008  
Steven Hall, Communications Director, (303) 239-3672

June 29, 2010

## **BLM plan proposes balanced management, responsible oil and gas leasing in NW Colorado, and protection of Vermillion Basin**

CRAIG, Colo. – The Bureau of Land Management announced today that its upcoming Proposed Resource Management Plan for the Little Snake Field Office in northwestern Colorado would continue to allow oil and gas development on most of the lands and minerals managed by the Field Office, but would protect the 77,000-acre Vermillion Basin from energy development.

The Vermillion Basin is prized for its remoteness and wilderness characteristics. It is one of the larger contiguous blocks of public land in northwestern Colorado not currently leased for potential oil and gas development.

“The Proposed Little Snake Resource Management Plan presents a very balanced and responsible approach to oil and gas leasing and development,” said BLM Colorado Director Helen Hankins “It reflects the common-sense approach of pursuing continued development in areas that are already leased, while protecting areas like the Vermillion that communities enjoy for its backcountry experience and its signature beauty.”

While more than one million acres are currently leased for oil and gas in the Little Snake Field Office, less than 15 percent of those leases have been developed for oil and gas.

The Proposed Plan would continue to allow oil and gas development on most of the lands and minerals managed by the Field Office, but would add new stipulations and conditions to ensure sensitive resources receive adequate protection, particularly priority sagebrush habitat.

BLM released the Draft Little Snake Plan for public review in 2007. That plan analyzed a range of possible alternatives, including a no leasing option for Vermillion Basin. The Preferred Alternative in the Draft would have opened the entire Basin to leasing, but required a highly restrictive approach to development.

The Proposed Plan is expected to be released for a 30-day protest period in late July. It provides a framework to guide management decisions on approximately 1.3 million acres of BLM-administered public lands and an additional 1.1 million acres of subsurface mineral estate administered by the Little Snake Field Office in Moffat, Routt, and Rio Blanco counties.

Major issues addressed in the Proposed Plan include energy and mineral development,



special management areas such as lands with wilderness character and Wild and Scenic Rivers, transportation and travel management, and wildlife habitat – particularly for sage grouse and elk.

A Record of Decision that will detail the final decisions in the Resource Management Plan will be issued after resolution of any protests received and a 60-day Governor's consistency review.

###